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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: review of further implementation of the World Summit for Social Development and the outcome of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly

Statement submitted by HelpAge International, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council**

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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* E/CN.5/2005/1.
** This statement was received after the established deadline date.

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2005 is a special year for all citizens of the world, rich and poor.

It is a chance not only to chart failure, but also to renew energy and commitment - both to people centred development and human rights fulfilment in the spirit of successive international and regional agreements. It is a year for Poverty to be Made History, with increased and better aid that delivers tangible benefits to the poorest. It is the year of a new 'Agenda for Africa' in support of a strong and prosperous Africa, and for renewed commitment to the 2015 targets.

The occasion of this 43rd session of the Commission for Social Development is to review progress of the Copenhagen Social Summit, including the second commitment to "*eradicating poverty in the world, through decisive national actions and international cooperation, as an ethical, social, political and economic imperative of humankind.*" Five years ago, HelpAge International suggested[1] that the litmus test to measure the success of Social Summit goals would be how the poorest older women and men were benefiting from these commitments. There has been some progress. The 2002 Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing builds on Social Summit commitments, affirming the rights of older women and men, to development, to inclusion in poverty programmes, to participation, to a voice, to social security and social integration, to freedom from abuse and discrimination, to employment, to subsidised health care and to basic services such as water and sanitation.

Nevertheless the Summit review is reminding us that there is much to be done and no time to lose. High levels of income inequality, and social exclusion persist. The goals of greater equality for the poor, including older women and men, of access to employment and opportunity have not been reached. In many countries the poor of all ages are staying poor, or growing poorer even with economic growth. In particular, the numbers of the chronically poor and socially excluded, those who benefit least from economic growth and development, are growing.

Currently one in 6 of the inhabitants of Sub Saharan Africa are chronically poor. Key features of chronic poverty include its duration, its difficulty to get out of and its intergenerational transfer. Chronic poverty affects the old and young particularly. They make up the majority of the 900 million who may still be in poverty even if MDGs are met by 2015.

The chronically poor include the social groups of special interest to this Commission – older women and men, children, unemployed youth, women, the disabled, migrants, the dispossessed, the invisible and uncounted. They include the orphans and vulnerable children and their older carers battling against HIV/AIDS. 60 % of fewer than 15s live with older carers in parts of Africa. They do not have access to the basic services to which they are entitled, nor to the development benefits voted by successive summits.

Governments, civil society representatives and their organisations need to ask themselves hard questions - not only about why the chronically poor have not benefited as they should from development, but also how programmes agreed as a result of the reviews will deliver to them.

[1] HAI 2000 *Intergenerational Solidarity: the key to a society of all ages.*

This is why HelpAge International is calling for a global commitment to increased social protection to further social summit goals. New, pro poor people centred programmes are needed to deliver human rights goals of equity and redistribution, and to target the poorest.

There is growing evidence is that social protection in the form of health and education, and particularly cash transfer in the form of old age pensions and child grants, not only responds to poor peoples priorities, but takes forward human rights, supports social inclusion and targets the poorest.

Regular and dependable income in even small amounts achieves poverty reduction and enables poor people to access development benefits such as health, water, education, improved nutrition and so on, to support children in their care as well as themselves. For example, in a pilot programme supported by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit-GTZ (German Agency for Technical Cooperation) in collaboration with the government of Zambia, both school attendance and nutrition appear to have improved since the introduction of a monthly cash transfer of approximately US $6.00 - equivalent to a 50kg bag of maize.

HelpAge International is calling for enhanced social protection and cash transfer to form part of every national poverty reduction strategy. This would enable governments to establish new programmes, scale up existing programmes of cash transfer that target the poorest, and gather evidence and learn from existing schemes. International support is needed for those countries that have established, or want to establish increased social protection, cash transfer and social pension schemes, including Nepal, Bolivia, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Kyrgyzstan, Mozambique, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia.

Global action on social protection would go a long way to further the delivery of donor and recipient country human rights obligations to the poorest people, and thereby take forward and develop the social summit commitments in concrete and tangible ways. All citizens, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity and ability, in all countries should be able to realise their rights to education, health and a regular income in old age.

Such action would realise the desire expressed in 2001 by Mr. K. Y. Amoako, Executive Secretary for the Economic Commission for Africa, when he said: "*Good governance means respecting and fulfilling the rights of citizens. For the international partnerships, we envisage a compact in which African governments and their development partners jointly meet their obligations to the world's poorest citizens.*"